



Clarion

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Church Polity and Civil Law¹

By Dr. K. Deddens

Spiritual body

When we speak about Church Polity, we should always bear in mind that the church of Jesus Christ is a *spiritual body*. This is especially important when we discuss the connection between Church Polity and Civil Law. In the Netherlands a debate was held about this topic. Last year Mr. J.R. Krol, LL.M., who studied law and who is a crown prosecutor, published an essay entitled "A Reconnaissance around the Church Order."¹ In that essay he regretted the fact that the General Synod of Kampen, 1975, did not appoint one or more lawyers to the committee for the revision of the Church Order. Says Mr. Krol, "The Reformed Churches need a thoroughly revised Church Order. For that purpose a committee of lawyers and theologians who are interested in matters of Church Polity must be established within our churches. In this committee there is then the possibility for both to discuss this revision together."²

A response to this essay came from Dr. W.G. de Vries in a few articles entitled "Church Order and Jurisprudence."³ He first reminded his readers of the fact that the most recent revision of the Church Order dated from the General Synod of Groningen-Zuid, 1978, about ten years ago, and then dealt extensively with the difference which exists between Church Polity and Civil Law. He especially pointed to the fact that in many countries Civil Law is based on the pagan Roman law. Also the Roman Catholic Church bases its Canon Law on this Roman law of nature. In this respect, the Canons of Dort, III/IV, Article 4 can be quoted: "To be sure, there is left in man after the fall, some light of nature, whereby he retains some notions about God, about natural things, and about the difference between what is honourable and shameful, and shows some regard for virtue and outward order. But he is so far from arriving at the saving knowledge of God and true conversion through this light of nature that he does not even use it properly in natural and civil matters."

Dr. W.G. de Vries continued by referring to lectures of the late Prof. F.M. ten Hoor, who was professor of Theology in Grand Rapids for many years after 1900. Ten Hoor said, "The naturalistic view of life denies the divine origin of law. It is derived from man, but not from a single man, because that should lead to individualism and should make law impossible. No, it is derived from society or the community. The state is here the source of law, also of ecclesiastical law."⁴

I read practically the same in Ten Hoor's *Theological Encyclopedia*, his introduction on theology, dating from the year 1918. In this work Ten Hoor wrote about the theology of ecclesiology, "The Church has the right to make regulations. But these regulations must always proceed from the Scriptures,

and no elements may be brought in which are in conflict with the principles which are embodied in Reformed Church Polity."⁵ In other words, there is a great difference between Church and State in this respect. "The true status of the Church is only to be known from the Scripture, and that status is in agreement with the spiritual body of Christ."⁶ "It belongs to the task of Church Polity to give an exposition about the relation between Church and State. Emphasis must be put on the Church's independence from the State, and also upon the fact that the civil government has to recognize the Church and her right of property. In this respect it may not be forgotten to point out from history that whenever the government exercised its power in and over the Church, this caused incalculable damage to the Church."⁶

Luther and Calvin

In the law of nature, as followed by the Roman Catholic Canon Law, the Church is treading in the footsteps of the State. However, the Reformers of the 16th century rejected this idea completely. As for Luther, on December 10, 1520, Luther burned not only the papal bull with which the Pope had condemned and excommunicated him, but also the whole papal law, as stated in the *Corpus Juris Canonici*, the whole collection of Roman ecclesiastical laws. It is no wonder that lawyers of that time opposed Luther's act. Unfortunately, after Luther the lawyers won the battle, and the result was that the churches again became dependent on the State in several countries, especially in Germany.

As for Calvin, it is well-known that the Reformer of Geneva had a lifelong struggle with the State regarding the rights of the church. Calvin stressed very much the *spiritual* character of Church Polity. He often used the term *disciplina*, not only for what we call church discipline, but also for the care for the souls. In this matter not only the office-bearers are involved, but also all the members of the congregation. Calvin never argued in a formal, let alone, a formalistic way, so that, for instance, because of faults in the procedure a whole matter of "disciplina" could be blocked. He always stressed the matter of the care for the souls. The specific nature of Church Polity is then that discipline is to be executed. "It is something else than the law of nature, civil law, law of societies or whatever."⁷

It is interesting to quote Calvin's introduction on church discipline:

Necessity and nature of church discipline

The discipline of the church, the discussion of which we have deferred to this place, must be treated briefly, that we may thereafter pass to the remaining topics. Discipline depends for the most part upon the power of the keys and

upon *spiritual jurisdiction*. To understand it better, let us divide the church into two chief orders: clergy and people. I call by the usual name "clergy" those who perform the public ministry in the church. We shall first speak of common discipline, to which all ought to submit; then we shall come to the clergy, who, besides the common discipline, have their own.

But because some persons, in their hatred of discipline, recoil from its very name, let them understand this: if no society, indeed, no house which has even a small family can be kept in proper condition without discipline, it is much more necessary in the church, whose condition should be as ordered as possible. Accordingly, *as the saving doctrine of Christ is the soul of the church, so does discipline serve as its sinews, through which the members of the body hold together, each in its own place.* Therefore, all who desire to remove discipline or to hinder its restoration — whether they do this deliberately or out of ignorance — are surely contributing to the ultimate dissolution of the church. For what will happen if each is allowed to do what he pleases? Yet that would happen, if to the preaching of doctrine there were not added private admonitions, corrections, and other aids of the sort that sustain doctrine and do not let it remain idle. Therefore, discipline is like a bridle to restrain and tame those who rage against the doctrine of Christ; or like a spur to arouse those of little inclination; and also sometimes like a father's rod to chastise mildly and with the gentleness of Christ's Spirit those who have more seriously lapsed. When, therefore, we discern frightful devastation beginning to threaten the church because there is no concern and no means of restraining the people, necessity itself cries out that a remedy is needed. Now, this is the sole remedy that Christ has enjoined and the one that has always been used among the godly. [Italics added, K.D.]⁸

Calvin speaks about a *spiritual jurisdiction*. For him the ecclesiastical law has its own nature. That has to do with the "Spiritual order which our Lord has taught us in His Word," according to what we confess in Article 30 of the Belgic Confession.⁹

Service

In this way Reformed Church Polity was set up as a spiritual order. It was stated already in Emden, 1571, and confirmed at Dort, 1618/19, in the presbyterial Church Order. "The church is the subordinate of its Personal Head, the living and present Jesus Christ. The presbyterial church government is then, according to the principles of the Church Order of Dort, the ministration of the *one* supremacy of the *one* Head, Jesus Christ, in His church as *one* body."¹⁰

There is one keyword in the whole matter of church government, namely, *service*. The office-bearers, and also the members of the church have to serve Jesus Christ, the only King of the church, and they have to serve each other. This is what Christ Himself taught His disciples and also the church of all ages: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves (Luke 22:24 ff.). Christ Himself gave the great example: "... I am among you as one who serves" (verse 27).



¹ In *Radix*, Oct. 1988, pp. 227-233.

² *Ibid.*, p. 227.

³ *De Reformatie* 64, Feb. 1989, p. 425 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

⁵ F.M. Ten Hoor, *Theologische Encyclopaedie* (Grand Rapids, Mich.), p. 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁷ W.G. de Vries, *De Reformatie* 64, Feb. 1989, p. 426.

⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes* IV, 12, 1.

⁹ B.C., Art. 30. The French text gives, "selon la police spirituelle," and the Latin text: "spirituali illa politia."

¹⁰ J.J. van der Walt, *Christus as Hoof van die Kerk en die Kerk en die Presbiteriale Kerkregering* (Potchefstroom 1976), p. 170 ff. (Abstract in English).



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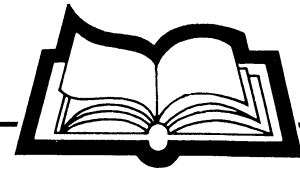
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By J. De Jong

... and the power of the Lord was with Him to heal." Luke 5:17b

Messianic Power

The comment that forms a prelude to the account of the healing of the paralytic in Luke appears mysterious, if not redundant. Literally the text says: the power of the Lord was with Him for working healings. Both Matthew and Mark do not include this remark. And one might question its necessity. Did not the Lord Jesus always have the power to heal? Indeed, He was true God. And the proclamation of forgiveness of sins as communicated to the paralytic serves precisely to point this out.

Still this is an important addition to the account in that it shows for us the Lord's way of working. Indeed, He was true God, and this miracle contributes to the strengthening of faith in this truth. But in the way that Luke refers to the presence of the power of the Lord, we learn that the Lord Jesus never used His power arbitrarily. In fact, He had emptied Himself of divine power! And as an obedient Son, He waited upon the Father in regard to the exercise of His healing power.

Indeed, the power of God radiated from the Lord Jesus at all times. Perhaps because of the special focus of his gospel as directed to the Gentiles, Luke takes special notice of this. Christ was born out of the power of God, Luke 1:35; with authority and power, He commanded the unclean spirits to come out, Luke 4:36. He went forth in the power of the Spirit, 4:14. Christ is not just a prophet endowed with power; rather, His whole existence is determined by the power of God. He bears God's power in such a way that all His works are demonstrations of divine power.

On the other hand, this text makes clear that the origin of this power lies with God. And the phrasing suggests a dependance of the Lord upon the will of His Father. The Father sets before Him the times and occasions to heal and to demonstrate His power in the Son. This line of dependance upon God returns in the account of the healing of the woman with the flow of blood, Luke 8:46, and in other healings where the Lord Jesus perceives that power has gone forth from Him, Luke 6:19. In these instances, the Lord Jesus is as much *Servant* as He is *Lord*. He is as much an *instrument* of God as He is *representative* of God.

And how would the Lord Jesus know when the Father had called Him to reveal divine power? Was there a special telepathy between the Father and the Son? Rather, we must think of the normal channels of *prayer*. Just before this

decisive miracle which showed God's power, the Lord Jesus had withdrawn and *prayed*, Luke 5:16. This miracle is proof that Christ's prayer was answered.

Here we find a line in which we see the Lord Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies. Indeed, He was filled with the power of the Spirit. And by His own authority He cast out demons and forgave sins. Yet the power which came forth from Him and which was demonstrated by Him was not just His own; it is also described as the power of the Father, and that first of all! So the Lord Jesus fulfilled the words of David: "the LORD was my stay" and "the LORD girded me with strength." Psalm 18:18,32. Christ fought His battle in the power of His God. By trusting in the God who promises, He won our salvation.

So we must see the Saviour as *Servant* as much as we see Him as our *Lord*. And in this passage the greatness of His divine power is complemented with the humble obedience of His true humanity. He is here revealed as *Son of God* and *Son of man*. For the heart of this miracle concerns the forgiveness of sins — something which was always God's prerogative alone. But the miracle is set within the context of the controversy with the Pharisees. Precisely this miracle served as a catalyst to that controversy. The Lord Jesus did not willingly choose the controversy, but it was laid upon Him by the Father. It was the Father who wanted His power demonstrated before the Pharisees in the person of the Son. Yet this would instill in them the hatred by which Jesus would be put to death.

Here we must praise the *majesty* of the Son. He is able to forgive sins! Here we must also praise the *obedience* of the Son! He did not shrink back from the duties assigned to Him by the Father. Indeed, He also *willed* to bring the forgiveness of sins! He willed to work our salvation! Therefore, we witness Him humbling Himself daily during His life on earth for the sake of the elect.

Here we find a great comfort: for as Christ willingly served then, so He serves His Church today in His exaltation. The power of God rests with Him in fullness. And all who trust in Him may be sure that He will provide all that is needed to lead His children to salvation. For He paid the price for our sins! And He provides the healing through which we may complete our course, and inherit life eternal!



A report of the second meeting of the I.C.R.C.

By G.H. Visscher

The city which only three years before had hosted a world exhibition with spectacular fanfare hardly batted an eye as an event commenced which would be considerably more significant in the history of the church and thus of the world: the second meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches. Who noticed the delegates and observers who flew in from all corners of the globe? Who was concerned about the different stances and vantage points from which the delegates would come as they sought to promote unity among churches that were committed to the Reformed faith? Who paid any attention to the expectations and reservations of the various delegates? Yet even churches very limited in financial resources struggled to find ways and means to send representatives, for what was impossible for previous generations was becoming a reality: in an age of fragmentation and division, a vehicle was taking shape that would stimulate unity — unity not, after the style of our day, at the expense of the truth but on the basis of the very truth of God as expressed in the Reformed confessions. Article 3 of the Constitution reminds us of the laudable goals of the conference:

1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the member Churches have in Christ;
2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among member Churches;
3. to encourage cooperation among the member Churches in the fulfillment of the missionary and other mandates;
4. to study the common problems and issues that confront the member Churches and to aim for recommendations with respect to these matters;
5. to present a Reformed testimony to the world.

Opening

On the evening of the twentieth of June, then, delegates, observers and members of local churches gathered for a service organized by the Canadian Reformed Church of Cloverdale in order to pray that the Lord might bless in every

way the meetings that would follow. The Reverend M. van Beveren, one of our retired ministers, who had played an important role in the forming of the ICRC, led the worship service and in his sermon called the participants of the conference to remember the foundation rediscovered in the Reformation and ever so essential for Reformed Churches today: justification by faith. Ultimately, he said, what is normative and decisive also in this endeavour is not whether others live up to the traditions, styles and expectations of one's own church, but whether there is an acknowledgement of this central doctrine of the Reformed faith, namely, the glorious gospel of justification through faith only in Jesus Christ. Therein alone lies the power of the church.¹

The following day, the Rev. J. Visscher, as chairman of the hosting church, as member of Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad, and as member of the Interim Committee of the ICRC, declared the Conference officially opened. The next eight days were then packed with the

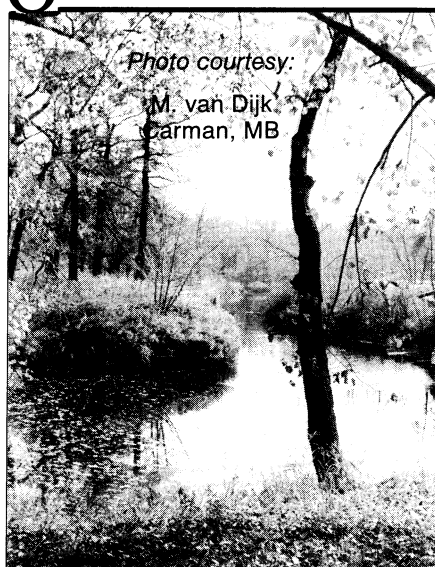
presentation and discussion of seven papers as well as with reports from several committees, often followed by lengthy deliberation. Since all the speeches are to be published in the final Proceedings of the Conference, and since some of them may very well appear here at a future date, we shall not attempt to review them now, with the exception of one. Rather, it would be far more beneficial to touch on some of the highlights of the conference and thus make clear both its strengths and weaknesses and what the future may very well hold for this amalgamation of Reformed Churches.

The constitution and the church

Among the more thorny matters that the Conference needed to deal with were the proposals of several churches with respect to the constitution. While there were several proposed alterations with regard to the regulations of the Conference that were only of minor importance, there were also others of a more serious nature as they dealt with the basis, purpose, and authority of the Conference (articles 2, 3, 5).

To begin with the latter, as a result of a letter from the Ebenezer Church at Burlington our 1986 General Synod requested that the ICRC amend article 5 from its former wording "are urged to receive" to "are to be informed" so that it now reads "The conclusions of the Conference shall be advisory in character. Member churches are urged to be informed of the decisions of the Conference and are recommended to work towards their implementation." Synod 1986 was rightly concerned that an organization such as the ICRC might behave in a supervisory and hierarchical fashion, decreeing what member churches must do and calling them to account if they should fail to do so. But the churches represented were unanimous that this ought not to be so, and this amendment was easily adopted. Moreover, throughout the Conference, whenever recommendations or motions came forward which suggested anything other than an

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advisory nature to this body, they were appropriately modified. About this matter then there was unanimity; should the Conference seek to usurp more authority than it was given, it would soon fall into shambles given the fact that churches of Reformed persuasion would accept no such hierarchicalism; but if it recognizes its proper place, it will be what it was intended to be — a servant to the churches.

Other suggestions of the Canadian Reformed Churches however did not meet with such immediate acceptance, although the problem was not that delegates were not sympathetic to the concerns expressed but simply that it was believed that the existent wording of the constitution already adequately addressed them. The suggestion to add to article 4 of the constitution that “membership of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (now Reformed Ecumenical Council) is an impediment to membership of the I.C.R.C.,” supported also by our sister churches in Australia, was defeated because article 4 already reads: “Those Churches shall be admitted as members which . . . are not members of the World Council of Churches or *any other organization whose aims and practices are deemed to be in conflict with the Basis.*” It was felt that if one would add to this article the name of the REC, that would oblige the Conference to keep on updating it with respect to all other organizations considered to be conflicting with it and would give the mistaken impression that the conference has come about out of antipathy to other bodies rather than with its own positive purpose and goals. Moreover, if a church that is a member of the REC should request membership, the nature of its membership therein would be discussed both at the committee level and in plenary session and would no doubt be viewed as an impediment.

More difficult to deal with was the proposed amendment of Synod 1986, again supported by our sister churches in Australia, that a stipulation be added to article 2 stating that “the delegates subscribe only to the standards of the churches of which they are members.” After a going back and forth a number of times between the appointed committee and plenary session, it was decided that again the existing constitution was adequate on this point. For after all, are members of the Conference requested to subscribe to standards of a church other than their own? No, the constitution only declares that both the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards are considered *acceptable* to all. Our Dutch sister churches put it well when they officially responded to us on this point: “the difference between the Three Forms of

Unity and the Westminster Standards have never prevented us from acknowledging that both confessions are of a truly Reformed character. In subscribing to the Basis of the Conference the delegates only acknowledge that there is nothing in any of the confessions that could prevent full cooperation in the work of the Conference.” Unfortunately, however, it appears that the discussion on this point did leave a bad taste in the mouth of some. Members of the Free Church of Scotland stood up and stated that should they be requested to subscribe to the Three



Prof. D. MacLeod of the Free Church of Scotland

Forms of Unity, they would have no hesitation in doing so; hence they asked: What was the concern of the Canadian and Australian Churches? Were they perhaps afraid of “guilt by association”? Were these Churches perhaps suspicious of those of the Westminster tradition and unable to accept them after all? In response, a member of the Australian delegation rose to say that that was not so, for they had a sister church relationship with churches of the Presbyterian tradition, one of their churches had after all received a minister from churches of that origin, and that even today they were having discussions with similar churches. A delegate from our churches made a remark to the same effect; the relationship with the OPC, for instance, was a sign of the fact that the Westminster standards were acceptable to us. This interchange no doubt put a strain on the unity of the conference, for as the discussion on this point came to a close, surely all were left with the nagging question on

their minds: if the fact that the Westminster Standards were not considered unreservedly acceptable was not the motivating factor behind this proposed amendment to the constitution, then what was?

In connection with another discussion on constitutional matters the same strain between the Reformed and the Presbyterians became apparent again. With respect to article 3 regarding the purpose, the Free Church of Scotland had proposed that “the constitution should involve all member churches in a commitment to recognize the membership, ministry and sacraments of the other member churches.” The amendment never passed because it was felt by those of the continental tradition that it was up to the individual churches to initiate and consolidate sister-church relations before entering into this degree of fellowship; besides, in the opinion of most, the matter was sufficiently covered by the words of section 2 of article 3, namely that “the purpose of the conference shall be . . . to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among member Churches.” In the course of these discussions, the heart of some difficulties was touched upon. Members of the Free Church of Scotland spoke of the manner in which they invited visitors to the Lord’s Supper table and qualified ministers to their pulpits, and how it caused them grief not only that when they visited Reformed churches which were members of the ICRC the Lord’s table and the pulpits were closed to them, but also that when persons from such churches visited them they would often refuse to participate with regard to the table or the pulpit. It seemed to them that involvement in such a Conference as this implied recognition of sorts of each other as true churches; and if that is the case, why can they not be accepted as sister churches in this way as well? “If you call me brother as you do, does it not imply that my church is your sister?” Professor MacLeod asked. The discussion made it clear that the Presbyterian churches which are members do not follow the practice whereby the table is fenced only by way of an admonition read from the pulpit; rather, admission is a decision made by the session, and someone who is under discipline in one church would be refused in another as well. Obviously, unanimity was not reached on this point, although the degree of openness on this divisive point was something to note with thankfulness. Where does it leave us? The minutes record that indeed “at the heart of the matter is the doctrine of the church,” and with this in mind it happened that on the final day a “Committee on Theological Affirmation” was appointed, as recommended by the Pres-

byterian Church of Eastern Australia, in order to study the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards with respect to the church and the implications that this has for relations between churches. Appointed to this committee were the Professors D. MacLeod, J. Faber, E. Donnelly, B. Kamphuis, with N.H. Gootjes as a substitute. Hopefully, not only the Conference but also the Canadian Reformed Churches will in this way be served with



Prof. Dr. J. Douma of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

a scholarly report that will shed light on points that are presently generating quite some discussion.

Apartheid

Around this particular topic, about which Prof. J. Douma was to deliver a paper, there was considerable tension for a number of reasons. For not only is it so that newspapers pay considerable attention to it nowadays, but it is also so that other ecumenical organizations that hesitate to make use of the word "sin" with regard to homosexuality and the like are very quick to use it with respect to this particular subject. In fact, in the corridors we could hear how two observers from the Reformed Churches in South Africa, Prof. Dr. J.L. Helberg and Prof. Dr. V.E. D'Assonville had just before this Conference attended the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids where they had been stripped of their status and forced to leave because their church had supposedly failed to condemn apartheid with sufficient emphasis and clarity. While we were concerned about some of the tensions apparent in the con-

ference, they assured us that this was "paradise" compared to what they had been through, and it was that because here there was an obvious commitment to the authority of Scripture and the truth of the Reformed confessions. But still there was apprehension around this point, for after all, what was the conference going to do on this issue? Make a political statement? Thrash out several resolutions on the issue? Particularly with seven South African representatives present, there was reason for concern. It was in fact because of these kinds of concerns, that one of the delegates from the Free Reformed Churches in Australia rose shortly after the Conference was opened and stated that the paper on Apartheid should be struck from the agenda as it was a political rather than ecclesiastical issue. The Conference, after hearing a recommendation from the Constitutional Committee, decided however, that the paper ought to be presented and discussed since the topic had come properly on the table of the Conference in the same way as all the other topics had and since it was more than just a political issue; besides, is it not possible that out of other papers at this or a later conference political consequences might be drawn?

In his speech, then, Professor Douma made it clear that for the state as well as the church, apartheid is morally unacceptable and in conflict with the Scriptures. The church must condemn Apartheid unambiguously, must call on the government to do the same, and reject revolution and violence as tools to eliminate it. In the lively discussion that followed, it became apparent that none of the churches denied at present that Apartheid as such was unbiblical, that the problem was that this political, social, and economic system cannot be dismantled overnight, and that the question remained to what extent the church needed to become involved in this matter and make pronouncements about it. In the professor's concluding remarks, however, he stated that in his opinion the church had a responsibility to speak very clearly since apartheid is sin and speaking out against sin is always an ecclesiastical task.

How did the ICRC then distinguish herself on this point from other such organizations? Especially in the fact that here there was no hypocritical magnification of this issue while diminishing others. It was clear that homosexual actions and so many other aberrations of our times would just as emphatically be declared to be sin of which man must repent. And it was stated that this was not the decisive question that would determine whether South Africans could be admitted or would be sent home. The fact that the

world ignores a hundred other atrocities and aberrations and focuses its spotlight on this one alone, did not cause the ICRC to do the same. What is determinative instead is whether there is a sincere striving to live according to Word of God and the Reformed confessions and to apply them to all the varied and formidable issues of the day.

Ecumenical Creeds

At the ICRC meeting at Edinburgh in



Rev. W. Boessenkool of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

1985, a committee was appointed "to study the text of the three Ecumenical Creeds in order to come to a common text that can be recommended to the member churches"; in doing so, this committee was to scrutinize especially the International Consultation Text of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, a text which was found to have its weaknesses. The final result of this substantial report is that the churches have before them a suggested modern translation of the three Ecumenical Creeds. Our churches would do well to consider the improved English of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. Comparing the suggested version of the Apostles' Creed with our present redaction, one notes that it is recommended that "only begotten" be replaced with "only" once again, that "by the Holy Spirit" could be improved upon with either "of" or "from the Holy Spirit," that the "I believe" in article 9 could be omitted, and that the word "Christian" should be omitted as well. Again, this is only advisory in character and the churches are left free as to what to do with it, but surely when such a gathering of Reformed

scholars and churches is of one mind with respect to such a matter, the advice will be seriously considered.

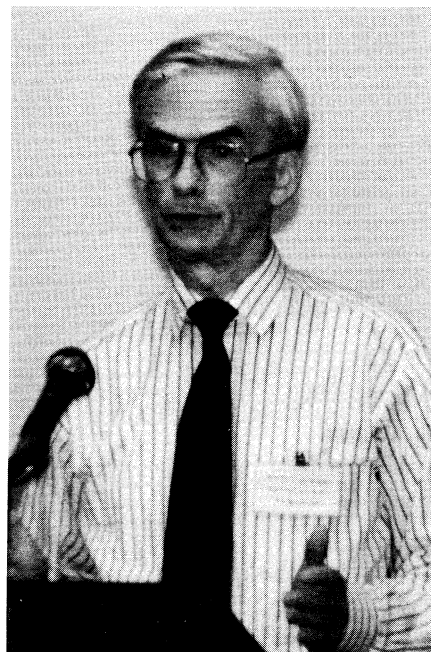
Missions

The Edinburgh meeting of the ICRC in 1985, taking up a request from our sister churches in the Netherlands, and realizing that throughout the world Reformed churches were no doubt doing missionary work and related work with a great degree of overlap, appointed a missions committee with the purpose of gathering information regarding (a) missionary activities and training programs, (b) the possibilities of coordinating missionary activities of member churches in training and exchanging missionaries, and (c) Reformed missionary literature.

With respect to (a), it was reported that "there is at present no overlap of missionary activity undertaken by member Churches: no two Churches are working in the same area," suggestions were made concerning future consultation in this regard, and the committee received the mandate to take a closer look at the various programs of missionary training in existence. Regarding (b), some requests for assistance were aired and it was noted, for instance, that as a result of ICRC contact our sister churches in the Netherlands are working together with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ireland to establish a Reformed congregation in the north of England. And with respect to (c), it was noted that in the Netherlands a predominantly English periodical, entitled *Reflection: an International Reformed Review of Missiology* is being published under the direction of Rev. L. J. Joosse in order to stimulate Reformed thought with respect to missions.

At first glance, some of this cooperative activity might seem rather controversial. Are we not following the false ecumenism of our age when differences on the homefront are disregarded on the mission field? But clearly, whatever information is passed on here is again advisory in nature and the churches are free to do with it as they feel they must. Whether or not any cooperation becomes a reality depends indeed on the degree of differences between such churches. One church stated clearly that they could only cooperate with an actual sister church in such ventures, and that position was not challenged. But one might think, in this regard, of the advice that our own fathers received when they left the Netherlands, namely, not to begin immediately by creating another Reformed Church in Canada but rather to attempt first of all to unite with an existent church. Even though those who tried to follow this route met with difficulties and eventually the Canadian Reformed Churches were

established, yet it was good advice, as it was meant to deter the needless proliferation of divisions that grieves the Lord our God. So too with missionary activity. If we wish to hasten toward the day of the return of our Lord Jesus, we will be aware



Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen

that it is wasteful to duplicate efforts and manpower when they are already in such short supply. Also on the mission fields of the world, we need to work towards true unity in Christ.

CHURCH NEWS



CALLED and DECLINED to Lincoln, ON

REV. R. AASMAN
of Ancaster, ON

* * *

CALLED to Bedforddale, Australia

REV. A. VAN DELDEN
of Lynden, WA, U.S.A.

* * *

CALLED to Fergus, ON

REV. J. MULDER
of Burlington-West, ON

Inter-church relations

Towards the end of the conference, an afternoon was taken for a discussion on Inter-church relations in the format of a workshop led by Dr. J. Visscher. The workshop was occasioned by the fact that different churches are at the moment coming forward with different rules for the exercising of their sister-church relationships and that therefore any church having relations with other churches might find itself with different rules for different "sisters." Obviously some uniformity is desirable here. Moreover, another problem is the fact that churches of Presbyterian background generally speak of "fraternal relationships" instead, and these do not entirely coincide with the concept of "sister churches." Thus, after surveying the various practices, the Rev. J. Visscher suggested the following set of rules for discussion purposes:

1. to take mutual heed that the fellowshipping churches do not deviate from the Christian doctrine and practice as taught in the Holy Scriptures and summarized in the Reformed confessions;
2. to inform each other of changes proposed in doctrine and church government;
3. to forward the Acts/Minutes of each other's Assemblies/Synods and to invite delegates to each other's Assemblies/Synods;
4. to accept attestations or certificates of membership and to permit each other's ministers to preach the Word and administer the sacraments, when invited by a local church council or session;
5. to inform each other regarding relationships with third parties and membership in ecumenical organizations.

Aspects thereof were discussed at length. A suggestion was made, for instance, to make the first point somewhat more positive as the impression is created that more than anything else we are "watchdogs" of each other rather than being there for mutual encouragement and edification. Whether a sister-church relationship necessarily entails exchange of ministers as mentioned under the fourth point was also questioned, but the consensus seemed to be that due to the centrality of the preaching of the Word, omitting this expression of unity would be unacceptable. But on this point, no attempt was made to arrive at a definitive set of rules; the mere act of freely and openly discussing the matter will hopefully work towards some uniformity as the churches take note of the points that were made.

Conclusion

While there are several points as well

as very worthwhile speeches that could be commented on, the above should suffice to give an impression as to what it is that took place at the International Conference of Reformed Churches hosted by our churches. Looking back at ten enjoyable days, there were indeed tense moments, as noted above. There were also humorous moments (such as an interchange between Dr. Faber and Dr. van Bruggen when the latter's paper was being discussed. Said Dr. van Bruggen: "The problem is that I am speaking exegetically, but you are listening with dogmatic ears," to which Dr. Faber responded "But I have two ears," only to be met with Dr. van Bruggen's retort "Yes, but sometimes it happens that the one ear hears better than the other"). But most gratifying of all was the fact that throughout the conference, there was a strong feeling of underlying unity. And true unity at that. It was heartwarming to

notice that while there were different views on several points, neither the authority of the Word nor the validity of the Confessions was ever called into question in any way; in a world of sects and cults and superficial Christianity, here was a whole gathering of Churches from around the globe dedicated to the Reformed faith! The undersigned observer went home convinced that as Reformed Churches we must make full use of such a vehicle. The problems that we face on the homefront are problems that Reformed people face around the globe. And discussion with all those dedicated to the Reformed faith might well be the way to work towards their proper resolution. We are extremely deluded if we believe that we can learn nothing from such a gathering; and if we are not that impressed by the amount that we can learn, surely then there is a God-given onus upon our shoulders to teach and

share whatever has been graciously bestowed upon us by the Lord our God. Also in third-world countries, there are churches struggling to remain Reformed over against modern evangelicalism; to us and all members of the ICRC is given the challenge to embrace them in Christian love and strengthen them. Times of discouragement are coming as the course of history reaches its end; shall those who are committed to the Reformed faith not therefore all the more reach out to those similarly committed? The Lord willing, in September 1993, the third meeting of the International Conference of the Reformed Churches will take place on the new campus of the seminary/university of the Presbyterian Church (Kosin) in Korea. May the God of all grace be with the churches as they evaluate the second meeting and prepare for the third.

¹See a previous issue of *Clarion* for complete text of sermon.

G.H. Visscher



Manoah Manor — sod-turning ceremony

Sod-turning ceremony

On Saturday, June 17, 1989, an official sod-turning ceremony took place at Manoah Manor in order to commemorate the beginning of construction of the new wing. Part of the ceremony was held indoors in the lounge due to inclement weather. Approximately 75 people attended this event.

The proceedings were opened with the singing of Psalm 92:1, 6, after which the chairman, Mr. C. VanVliet, led in prayer. In his welcome to those present the chairman expressed his thankfulness to our heavenly Father for His care and guidance and for answering our prayers so that we could start the long-dreamed-of expansion. He then introduced the speaker, Rev. W.W.J. VanOene, an old as well as new, board member, to introduce to those present the history and development of the society.

In his speech, Rev. VanOene reflected on the past and on God's faithfulness throughout the years and how He had prepared the hearts of all those involved, so that this work could continue. He then reviewed the history of the Canadian Reformed Senior Citizens Home Society since it was established in 1967. There were many ups and downs in the history of the society but due to the perseverance of the Board, the society remained active. In the early eighties the



Joy in old age

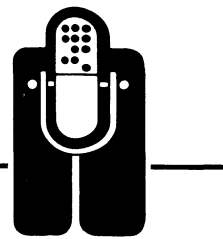
present property was purchased and development could begin. He ended his address by expressing his appreciation to all those who took an active part in the work of the society since it was established. He also thanked the Lord for allowing us to persevere.

The chairman then invited everyone to join him outside for the actual ceremony. The oldest male and female residents, Mr. G.R. Kleefman and Mrs. H.

Klos were asked to assist the chairman in turning the sod. After the ceremony Mr. Kleefman was presented with the shovel to assist him in his work, tending the garden and Mrs. Klos was presented with a bouquet of flowers.

In his closing remarks, the chairman thanked everyone for coming and helping us to make this a memorable occasion.





The regularity with which our column used to appear is somewhat missing in these months. For this reason various items which we mention may be "old news" to the brothers and sisters whom they concern in the first place. Others, however, may not have been aware of them and still appreciate hearing particulars about the other congregations.

Let us begin with paying attention to the building activities and searches for properties.

Orangeville had a disappointment when "much to our regret we also pass on the news that the sale of the old manse has fallen through. Hopefully another buyer will be found without much delay." Remember what the old manse was sold for? I hope for Orangeville that the price of houses has not dropped too much since they received that previous offer!

Ottawa seems to be in a somewhat more favourable position with their intended purchase of property.

"There is some discussion on the developments regarding the purchase of the property on Richmond Road. The consistory, having been encouraged by the congregation at the meeting of May 10, 1989, decided to proceed with the process to purchase the property." A meeting "with the community" was held in order to explain the congregation's intentions and to answer questions or take away objections which might be raised. Thought was also given to a fundraising campaign by either soliciting donations or asking for loans.

Elora was planning on purchasing property, but "the consistory has been informed that the church's application for a zoning change has been rejected by the local township. Entrance to the highway would be too dangerous, because motorists cannot see cars approaching over the hill." It was decided to keep looking for alternate properties.

Grand Valley, on the other hand, announced that "The Township of Luther has granted all the necessary permits we have asked for our property. However, they have added a stipulation that we must build the primary building first." This primary building is then the church building. Four options were mentioned in the bulletin, but the advice of the building committee was considered most advantageous: go back to the Township and try to have this stipulation removed.

Burlington-South decided not to buy the property which was considered, since the price was too high. I could very well understand their decision when seeing *how* high the price was: \$350,000.00!

In order to stay with the topic for a little while still, we make a quick trip to Australia and tell you that the Bedforddale Church is still looking for property. They did have a few properties under consideration, but one very suitably located piece of land had to be let go of, since here, too, the problem was access to the highway.

Besides problems with buildings and properties, there is the point of growth.

The Armadale Church answered the question, whether the volume of work justified adding a deacon to the number of deacons, in the affirmative.

The Church at Vernon topped the 100-mark, while in Coaldale "the matter of the size of the congregation and/or church building is discussed as well as splitting the congregation. It is proposed that a committee of seven persons (two persons from council, two from the Committee of Administration, and three from the congregation) be set up to discuss the prob-

lem of overcrowding and to suggest solutions. The committee is to report by November 1, 1989."

The Rehoboth Burlington consistory reported that "the matter of *church growth* and the possible calling of a second minister was discussed by council. Since there has been no appreciable growth during this past year, we will maintain our present arrangements."

A sad announcement was made in the Watford bulletin. "In the school news you could read from the chairman of the school society that Ambassador Christian School will close its doors for the last time at the end of June because no new teacher could be found. This comes as a disappointment and even a shock."

It is our sincere wish that the situation may be reversed soon and that in the meantime the students can be transported to London so that they will not be lacking of any Reformed instruction at school.

Various bulletins report on activities in connection with the Vacation Bible Schools. Sometimes plans had to be shelved because no teachers could be found for this work either. In other congregations, however, this activity could continue.

Toronto has a Saturday morning Bible School Program, and the attendance appears to be very encouraging.

The Lincoln Home Mission Committee was happy to state that "The radio broadcast in particular has a lot of feedback. People write, and ask for more information on a regular basis. If we are written to, we respond with more contact and more literature. Some of these inquiries have led to people becoming seriously interested in our way of life."

One is always wondering how many people listen to a certain broadcast. When delivering a sermon to the congregation, a minister sees the people in front of him and can establish eye contact with them, but when one speaks into a microphone without seeing anyone, it takes some imagination to visualize a living room or a car or a factory where one or two persons are listening to the radio.

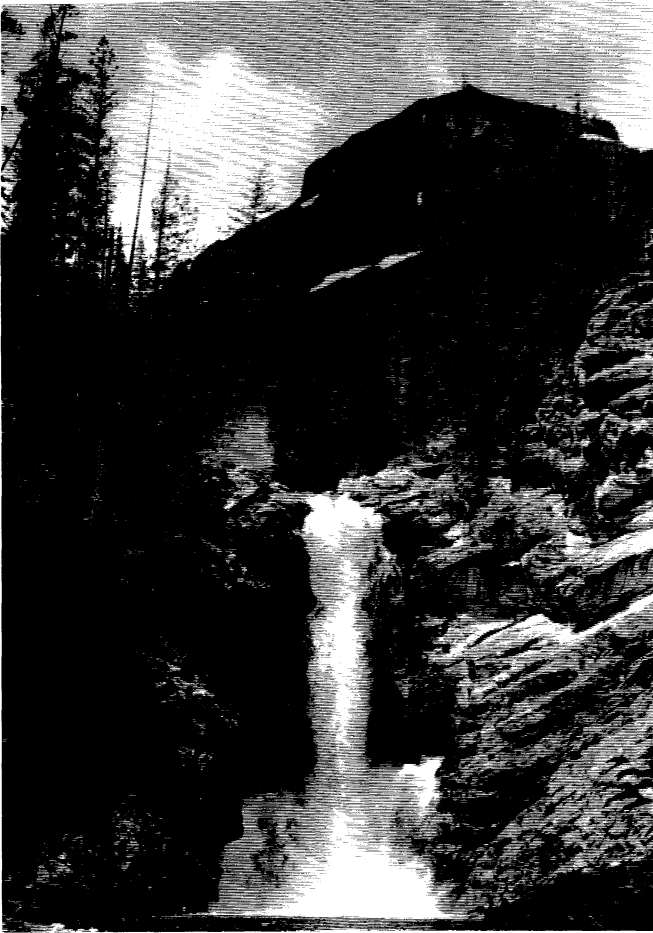
It was good to read in the Toronto bulletin that there is a certain way of determining approximately how many listeners we may count on without going into an expensive survey.

"The question has been asked a few times how many people listen to this broadcast but the radio station WDCX reported that they do not calculate the listening audience for the different programs because of the cost involved. However, they did say that for every response received there are about 1,000 listeners and judging by the number of letters received lately it would seem that 'The Voice of the Church' has quite a few listeners across Canada, also from non-Dutch background."

Now that we are in Toronto anyway, we pass on that "for some time the possibility has been discussed to have a sign at the corner of Yonge Street and Thornridge Drive to show the direction to our church building. An attractive sign has now been made to be put in place every Sunday morning."

Hamilton reports that "to date, about thirty-five people have requested to begin the Bible course offered by our churches."

What Burlington-West reported appears not to be connected with "home mission" but more with "home care." "A proposal from our ad hoc committee regarding *video recordings* of our worship services was supported by Council. No video recordings will presently be allowed. If in the future members



of our congregation who are unable to attend the worship services express a preference for video recordings over regular cassettes, this matter can be studied for feasibility by our Committee of Administration."

If I were unable to attend the services because of illness or for other valid reasons, and if I had a television set and video recorder, I definitely would prefer the video cassette over a regular cassette, i.e., an audio cassette. It is great that the Lord gave man the ability to find out about these possibilities in creation and that His children may benefit from them also in this manner.

In a few congregations a change in time for one of the services was object of discussion.

Grand Rapids' bulletin informs us that "the time change from 4 p.m. to 2 p.m. for the afternoon service was put on the table again. There are members who cannot make it at 4 p.m. but can at 2 p.m." The consistory decided "to poll the members of the congregation."

In Winnipeg "the evangelism committee reports that no correspondence has been received regarding the time change of the Sunday morning worship services. It is decided that as of August 1, 1989 the Sunday morning service will begin at 9:30 a.m."

From Winnipeg to Carman is not all that far. Thus we visit the Carman Church.

Yes, what about that "History Book"? Apparently it is a-coming! According to the information given, it may be expected towards the end of September. The price is quite steep, but we save this for next time!

"Our organ," Carman says, "is getting older and is in need of some repairs. Various options will be looked into." What about adding some pipes to the interior of the church building?

Although they do need repairs from time to time, pipe organs do not get older that fast. Would Coaldale's "old" one be something worth considering?

In connection with organs we relate that in Cloverdale it was proposed that the consistory introduce the custom "that a Psalm or Hymn be sung at the close of each meeting. This proposal is unanimously adopted."

We are not through with Carman yet. They pass on the happy news that "The Superannuation Fund received \$132,000.00 from the churches in Holland. This was our share from government moneys paid for all our ministers who have served in Holland. At present the fund stands at \$1,006,000.00 Although this appears very high, there will be more ministers retiring this year."

I am happy that the "oldies" who also served in the Netherlands were indirectly instrumental in providing this wind-fall. They are still good for something apparently.

This also appears from the fact that the Rev. and Mrs. Bruning were off to Tasmania to serve the Church at West Tamar for three months. It is the intention of the Rev. and Mrs. Van Rongen to go there for the same length of time when the Brunings return to Western Australia. The Rev. Klein is expected to arrive in West Tamar in the month of January next year.

In our own country the Rev. VanDooren is still serving the churches on Sundays, but he has been told by his physician to limit himself to preaching only once a Sunday.

There will be more ministers who have the experience which the Rev. Schouten of Calgary has. He put a "Library Call-in" in Calgary's bulletin. "Upon my latest count, well over thirty of my books are now in circulation in the congregation. I would, if possible, like to have them all returned before my summer break. But, of course, read them before you return them!"

Personally I have tried for several years to discover who borrowed my *Man van Conflict, Toch van Eenheid* by Rev. J. Bosch, a book on Prof. Lucas Lindeboom. Perhaps my search will be rewarded when I extend it to this column! Will it? The one who borrowed it must have read it by now, even if he or she read only one page a week.

As last item I would like to mention that the Young People's Societies in Ontario put out an attractive *Handbook for the Young People's Societies of Regional Synod East*. "The first section contains the constitution and bylaws of all the committees associated with the League. The second section is a membership list that will be renewed every year."

Among the committees mentioned above we find a Conference Committee as well as the I.L.P.B. (Inter-League Publication Board). We may conclude that it is a very useful booklet.

The *League Messenger*, a newsletter, was also issued and thereby the bond among the various societies will be maintained and strengthened. May this effort be well received by the various societies and their members and may it receive the cooperation of everyone. It is hard to keep something going if no appreciation is shown, whereas, on the other hand, a little encouragement will have great results.

There is one remark which I have to make about the title.

I deplore the fact that the words "Regional Synod East" are used. This can so easily lead to the thought that there is an existing entity by the name of "Regional Synod East," whereas we do not know any such phenomenon. I would suggest to change it to "Eastern Canada," especially since our young people undoubtedly want to include Lower Sackville as well. In that case it would not be an idle boast to speak of "Eastern Canada."

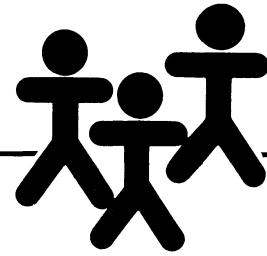
Much success and perseverance with your undertaking.

Till next time, the Lord willing.



SCHOOL CROSSING

By T.M.P. VanderVen



NO TEACHERS . . . NO SCHOOL

1. This column . . .

has often drawn attention to the annual struggle of our schools to find the staff to teach the children. A number of our schools has experienced firsthand the frustration of not being able to find the necessary teachers. A medley from various school magazines — published during April and May! — gives an impression of the struggles school boards have (had) to find sufficient staff for the 1989-1990 school year.

- *With thankfulness we note that we now have our eighth teacher (full-time). Mr. X of Y has accepted the appointment for the high school.*
- *Fortunately all our staff are in place. When we look at the ads in Clarion we recognize we have much to be thankful for.*
- *The hoped for response to the advertisement has not been forthcoming . . . The Ed. Committee is busy with contingency plans should we fail to attract a fourth staff member . . .*
- *Due to different developments our final staff arrangements for the coming school year still have to be made. The board appointed an applicant, but the original, long, attractive, and expensive XYZ advertisement in Clarion paid off! The decision of Mr. A. to go to XYZ is one of the reasons for extra board work in May and June . . .*
- *We ask for your prayers that the Lord will bless these efforts and fill the one vacancy we have in our staff for the 1989-90 school year. We are exploring all possible avenues to fill this position and we are looking at alternatives in case we cannot find a full-time teacher.*

Future staffing needs are being anticipated. We note with gratitude the increase in special needs programmes, often with Government support.

- *Education Committee Report: . . . We propose to the board to seek approval of the membership to expand the school building and to hire an extra teacher so that in the next school year we will be able to accommodate two special needs students.*
- As you all know the membership gave its approval.*

Special needs programmes do place quite an additional strain on the schools' resources in terms of personnel and expertise. An urgent call goes out to more people to specialize in this field.

2. School Closing

Do we take it for granted, from year to year, that somehow enough teachers can and will be found for our schools? Via the Ambassador Christian School's *School News* (Watford) we learned of the impending closing of this small school, a victim of the severe staff shortage. A sad "first" for Canadian Reformed education.

From the Chairman

A few more weeks and the summer holidays are here. Probably some of the students can tell you exactly how many more weeks or . . . days they still have to attend classes before they can enjoy their holidays.

For Ambassador Christian School it will mean that the doors will remain locked in September. We do not know if they will ever be opened again for staff and students here in Watford. This very sad thing is happening due to the lack of teachers. When we started our school society ten years ago, probably some of us had doubts if things would work out, financially and because of the minimal amount of students. But our Heavenly Father provided for us, and in 1982 we could begin in our own building, after using some classrooms in the public school for 2 years. All this is coming to an end. I am wondering why this is happening to Watford. Did we not do enough to prevent this, or were the reasons for starting our own school wrong? I do not believe that the reason for starting our own Canadian Reformed school was wrong. To have our covenant children educated in the line of Home, Church and School.

Maybe we could have done things differently in order to keep the school open. Maybe our advertisements were too plain and did not show the desperate situation which we are in. But we are not the only school that has staffing problems. Other schools had to combine grades and make do with fewer teachers and more parents helping out. Programs had to be cut, all because there are not enough teachers available.

Why are there so few young people considering training for teacher? Is it because they have often heard their parents speaking of our schools and teachers in a negative way? Or is it our aim to become successful in life, especially financially, and thus steer our children towards jobs that are more

financially rewarding? These are some of the questions which we should all look at very seriously. Are we as Canadian Reformed church members on the wrong track and is that the reason why the Lord withholds His blessing?

I hope and pray that the closing of our school will have a sobering effect on the Canadian Reformed community. Because if there is no change in attitude towards our schools more school doors may have to close or programs cut.

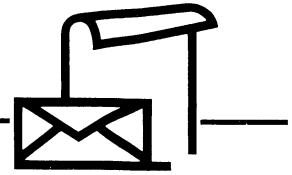
So far the chairman of the Watford school society. We sympathize with the brothers and sisters of this small congregation who also want to be faithful to their baptismal vows, in the homes as well as in school. Fortunately, alternative means to provide these children with Reformed education are being considered.

In the meantime, faithfulness to the covenant obligations which the LORD GOD Himself has placed upon us in His Word can never be wrong. Seeking to educate our children in the fear of His Name can never be wrong. However, whether the Lord will and does provide us with Reformed day schooling for our children is another matter. Our genuine desires and God's blessings are two separate matters. Surely, the presence of a Reformed school does not necessarily and automatically signify God's grace over the labours of that group of people; neither may the absence of such a school be seen, necessarily and automatically, as the absence of that divine grace.

A previous "School Crossing" struggled with the question "Where will all the teachers come from . . .?" It emphasized a *collective* responsibility and the need for a *collective* effort: School associations and their boards must become directly involved in recruiting teachers for our schools. To date few concrete suggestions and actions have materialized.

I do not believe that we are producing fewer teachers than is the case elsewhere. We may (and must) consider it a blessing from the LORD that we do need so many teachers for our covenant children (Psalm 127)! But the fact that our communities require relatively large numbers of teachers further underlines the urgency of a collective effort to recruit teachers for our schools. We must seriously continue our collective efforts to encourage more people to enter the teaching profession.





Dear Editor:

Thank you for your invitation to respond to Mr. Jones' letter in the June 9, *Clarion* regarding the "Hofford case."

Mr. Jones first responds to Mr. De Vos' letter in the April 14, *Clarion*. Mr. Jones argues that Mr. DeVos goes too far in concluding from the Fiftieth General Assembly's denial of the Hofford complaint that the OPC makes a "do-it-yourself-kit" out of the keys of the kingdom. Mr. Jones asserts: "The assembly did not adopt an official position by denying the complaint."

The Fiftieth General Assembly took three official actions in response to the Hofford complaint. 1.) They denied the complaint citing five grounds proposed by the committee. 2.) They referred the complainants to a set of nine observations in answer to the complaint. 3.) They commended to the churches for their study the Report of the Special Committee on Restricted Communion of April 15, 1972, from the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic.

While it is true on one hand that the Fiftieth General Assembly did not explicitly adopt an official position when it denied the complaint, it is on the other hand undeniable that the above cited actions of the Assembly constitute a *de facto* official position. The denial of the complaint on the five grounds clearly shows the Fiftieth General Assembly approved of the type of open communion complained against and disapproved of the type of closed communion argued by the complainants. The nine observations referred to the complainants contain a more detailed series of arguments designed to show why the complaint was wrong, and conversely, why the position of open communion defended by the Burtonville session was acceptable. One can argue that voting to refer the complainants to these nine observations does not mean that all affirmative voters themselves fully subscribed to the observations. Nevertheless, in a complaint situation at the highest level of the church, it is impossible to conceive that the argumentation of these observations, while not "the official position" of the church, does not represent the *de facto* official position. Finally, you do not "commend for study" a document which does not in some way represent the thinking of the churches regardless of the fact that it has not been adopted as "the official position" of the church.

Mr. Jones and others in the OPC who take refuge in the idea that the denial

of the complaint did not imply an official position are deceiving themselves with legal technicalities. The complaint was not rejected on mere technical grounds, nor was it denied in a theological/church political vacuum. The grounds, the observations, and the 1972 Report all make it abundantly clear where the OPC stands on the matter of fencing the Lord's Table. And it is not where the Canadian or American Reformed Churches stand (cf. Art. 61, of the Church Order).

In the second part of his letter, Mr. Jones argues that Mr. Hofford, *et. al.*, should have sought to have the subordinate standards of the OPC amended rather than file a complaint. The reason given is that the subordinate standards clearly support local congregational freedom in choosing a method of fencing the Lord's Supper, and by filing a complaint against a particular method in the abstract, the complainants, in effect, attempted to change the subordinate standards in a backhanded way.

First, it must be recognized that the complaint was a fully proper procedure to follow in this case. Mr. Hofford consulted in advance with at least two more experienced ministers in the OPC as to the proper path to follow in seeking redress in this matter, and the complaint method was approved. Furthermore, both the Presbytery and the General Assembly accepted the complaint as proper. Thus, any idea that the complainants acted in a disorderly way or sought to alter the subordinate standards in a backhanded way must be dismissed.

Secondly, four of the nine reasons supporting the complaint appeal to the subordinate standards of the OPC. Thus, the complaint did not come with a consciousness that its position was antithetical to the subordinate standards nor with a conscious intent to amend or add to the subordinate standards.

Furthermore, while Mr. Jones is technically correct that no specific case of abuse was cited in the complaint, specific cases of abuse lay behind the formulation and filing of the complaint. And these specific abuses are alluded to in the reasons supporting the complaint. The point here is that the complaint did not simply grow out of some abstract desire to alter the subordinate standards of the OPC, but rather it grew out of a desire to rectify what the complainants saw as specific abuses in the administration of the Lord's Supper at Burtonville. In such a concrete situation, the complaint pro-

cess was believed to be the best means of addressing these specific problems.

The larger question of whether or not the subordinate standards of the OPC support the method of administering the Lord's Supper practiced in Burtonville and approved by the Presbytery and the Assembly is open to debate. The scope of this response does not allow for a detailed arguing of the case. However, what is beyond debate is that the decision of the Fiftieth General Assembly and the actual practice of the vast majority of OP congregations is not consistent with Article 61 of our Church Order.

Mr. Jones asserts that, if upheld, our "complaint would have had the effect of adding to, if not amending our subordinate standards," with the implication that this would have been improper. Yet, just above, he quotes the Form of Government, XV:8, as saying that, "Deliverances, resolutions, overtures, and other actions which have the effect of amending or adding to the subordinate standards shall not be binding unless they have been approved by the general assembly and presbyteries in the manner provided in this Form of Government for the amendment of the constitution." Thus, if the Fiftieth General Assembly had upheld the complaint, and if such were judged to have the effect of amending or adding to the subordinate standards, such would not in itself be wrong. True, before such a decision could have binding effect, further steps would be necessary, but the Assembly could have taken action necessary to initiate those steps.

Mr. Jones further asserts that "by following complaint procedure, having it denied, and then withdrawing from our fellowship, nothing was really resolved." Mr. Jones suggests that if I had stayed in the OPC and tried to amend the subordinate standards, then matters could have been resolved.

In response, it should be pointed out that the complainants took the position that if the OPC were willing to study the matter — even granting an initial denial of our complaint — we would have stayed in the OPC and seen the matter through to its conclusion. However, much to our regret, the Fiftieth General Assembly rejected at least two attempts to have the matter kept alive by establishing a study committee. Does Mr. Jones think that my continued presence in the OPC was necessary for the issue to be pursued? If others in the OPC thought the issue was worthy of further discussion and study,

then certainly my presence would not be necessary. Indeed, a measure of the real interest in this issue can perhaps be had by surveying the articles on this issue which to my knowledge have subsequently appeared in OPC circles since the Fiftieth General Assembly: one! (by Rev. Karl Hubenthal in *Journey*, Nov./Dec. 1988, pp. 18-21).

Was "nothing really resolved" as Mr. Jones alleges? Quite to the contrary, I believe everything was really resolved. The Fiftieth General Assembly made it clear in its actions — and lack of them — that open communion (by verbal and written warning only) is an acceptable form of administering the Lord's Supper. Furthermore, by lack of action on the matter in the six years since the Fiftieth Assembly, it has been demonstrated that there is no official desire to seek any further resolution of this question.

Indeed, what is important for our churches is not only what the Fiftieth

General Assembly allowed, but what the OPC will not allow. And that is the consistent practice of closed communion as reflected in Article 61 of our Church Order. When Mr. Jones states that at stake in our complaint was the freedom of the local congregation to choose its own method of fencing the table, it must be recognized that the OPC affirmation of that freedom does not include the freedom to practice closed communion. For then, as the complainants were instructed by the General Assembly, those who do so run the risk "of a denominational exclusivism in practice if not in principle, an exclusivism that may compromise our witness to the Table as the Lord's." The fact that a particular congregation here or there may actually practice such restriction does not disprove my contention, but rather only reflects the fact that those congregations have temporarily managed to escape the imposition of the "freedom" which the OPC ap-

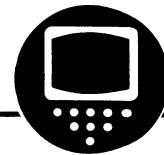
proves. And this is the same "freedom" from which Blue Bell liberated themselves.

Mr. Jones concludes: "It is therefore most wrong to see some inner connection between the Hofford case and the Blue Bell situation as Mr. De Vos asserts." In reviewing Mr. De Vos' letter, I'm not certain what that "inner connection" is to which Mr. Jones alludes. However, it is patently the case that there is a direct parallel between Laurel and Blue Bell — that parallel being in the matter of fencing the Lord's Table. In both instances, at different levels of jurisdiction, and at different times and places, the OPC has made it clear that the policy of closed communion, as we practice it according to Article 61, C.O., is not acceptable.

Sincerely,
B.R. Hofford



PRESS RELEASES



of the Canadian Reformed Teachers' College

Due to the fact that the members of the Board of Governors reside all over Canada, the daily operation of our College is supervised by the Executive Committee, which consists out of Ontario Governors, and meets as a rule on the first Friday of every month.

These meetings were attended by eight members, plus our Principal, br. VanderVen, our Treasurer, br. Gelderman, and our Secretary, sr. Van Huisstede.

In order to give all members of our Board the opportunity to comment on the minutes, we allow an extra month for this, and for this reason officially approve those two months later. There is almost always a letter from a member at the table with comments or suggestions about a matter in discussion. We encourage and welcome this type of input, because it gives us another opportunity to consider the matter.

The Treasurer, br. Gelderman, presents his monthly statement. This is done in great detail, and gives us up-to-date information on income and expenditures. In both meetings he expressed deep concern about the lack of regular income to meet our budget. Although we are grateful for the result of the drive for our building, it appears that this is affecting our regular income. We have a mortgage in place for about \$130,000 for the bal-

ance of the cost of building and renovations. This was taken out for a two-year term, and we will review this in about eighteen months from now.

The Building Maintenance Committee, chaired by br. Harry Hutten, reported on minor repairs to be done and other items like landscaping and weed control. The building is very functional and both staff and students are very happy with their new and "permanent" environment. It should be mentioned here that we were very grateful to our church in Hamilton for allowing us to use their basement facilities for so many years.

In our May and June meetings we appointed the College Recognition Committee. The initial mandate will be to monitor all developments in the relationship between government and schools in the various provinces. It is expected that if and when appropriate, the Committee will advise the Executive about possible action and/or reaction. The brs. H. Homan, G. Veenman and A. Witten were asked to form this very important committee.

Classroom visits were reported by brs. Bartels and Hordyk. The lectures attended were those of Rev. R. Aasman and Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff. The reports were very positive, and the respective lecturers will receive a copy of the report.

It appears that we will have six new students for the three-year program. The Principal made his usual presentation

and recommendation to the Executive, and the admission was approved. We are not that fortunate however, with the one-year program. We started out with two applicants out of which one went to a secular university and the other took a teaching position. As a result of this we may not have this program in September, and adjustments in our part-time lecturing faculty were made accordingly. We hope to get this program back on the track next year.

Mrs. Viersen of Neerlandia, Alberta, will start her "Savings Action" and she will be asked to appoint a treasurer to keep the moneys received in a separate account, apart from our general budget.

From time to time we do receive letters and suggestions from individual members about the set-up and organization of the Association. Two of these were addressed this year. The first one suggested to liquidate our Association and the other letter has some positive suggestions about restructuring our Board to have a better profile in Ontario. It may be of no surprise to you that we declined the first suggestion and further, that the second matter is under study.

May our God in Heaven bless the efforts of our College in preparing prospective teachers for the classroom, and may He also work in the hearts of all His people to make this financially possible.

For the Executive Committee,
ARIE J. HORDYK, President

Of Classis Ontario-North, June 9, 1989.

1. The meeting of delegates was opened on behalf of the Ebenezer church at Burlington-East by Rev. D. DeJong, who read 2 Timothy 2:1-13. After Hymn 39:1-3 was sung he led in prayer, especially remembering the upheaval in China and the consequences which this may have for our brotherhood in this country. He welcomed the delegates as well as the Rev. P. Aasman who was present as a guest.

A few words were spoken about 2 Timothy 2:1-13 in connection with the fact that two churches are seeking approbation of calls to ministers and with the fact that this classis must deal with several discipline cases. Rev. J. De Jong was congratulated with his recent appointment by General Synod 1989 as professor of diaconology. He mentioned that the church at Burlington-East has called the Rev. R. Aasman to fill the upcoming vacancy. The church at Grand Valley was congratulated with the acceptance of their call by the Rev. P. Aasman, and the Rev. Aasman with receiving and accepting this call. The church at Orangeville was congratulated with the acceptance of its call to the Rev. W. den Hollander. Finally, pastor R. Gleason was congratulated with the call he received from the "Silverstream" Reformed Church of Upper Hut, New Zealand. Rev. DeJong wished him wisdom and strength in coming to the right decision.

2. Examination of the credentials by the delegates of the church at Brampton reveals that the churches are duly represented. The churches at Grand Valley and Ottawa have one, the church at Orangeville two instructions.

3. Classis is constituted, and as officers are appointed: Rev. J. De Jong, chairman; Rev. G.Ph. van Popta, clerk; and Rev. D. DeJong, vice-chairman.

The chairman extends a word of thanks to the church at Burlington-East for preparing and convening classis, and to the Rev. D. DeJong for the words spoken by him.

4. The agenda is adopted after the three instructions were added, plus a request for advice in a matter of church discipline by the church at Burlington-South.

5. Approbation of calls according to Church Order Art. 5 (B and D).

a) The call of Rev. P. Aasman by the church at Grand Valley. The letter of call, letter of acceptance of the call, declaration of honourable release from Classis Ontario-South, good attestation and declaration of honourable release from the church at Hamilton, and declaration by the church at Grand Valley that the proper announcements were made and

no objections were brought forward, were presented. The officers report that all the required documents are in good order, and classis approves the call.

Rev. J. De Jong spoke some well-chosen words to the Rev. P. Aasman and the church at Grand Valley.

b) The call of Rev. W. den Hollander by the church at Orangeville. The letter of call, letter of acceptance of the call, declaration of honourable release from Classis Alberta/Manitoba, and declaration by the church at Orangeville that the proper announcements were made and no objections were brought forward, were presented. The officers report that two documents are missing, viz. good attestation and declaration of honourable release from the church at Winnipeg. The church at Orangeville is advised that it can request that a Classis Contracta be convened to deal with the request for approbation of the call.

6. A letter of the church at Burlington-South with a report on the inspection of archives is received with thanks.

7. The Rev. O.J. Douma, minister emeritus of the church at Groningen-Noord, the Netherlands, is welcomed as a visitor.

8. Question period according to Church Order Article 44 is held.

a) The church at Guelph asked and received advice in two cases of discipline.

b) The church at Burlington-East asked and received advice in a matter of discipline, as did the church at Burlington-South.

c) The chairman asked each of the churches whether the ministry of the office-bearers is continued, the decisions of the major assemblies are honoured, and whether there is any matter in which the consistory needs the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their church. Each of the churches answers the first two questions in the affirmative and the third in the negative.

9. Instructions of the churches are dealt with.

a) The church at Orangeville received a letter signed by two brothers on behalf of six families in Thornbury (Collingwood-Owen Sound area) expressing the desire to start a house-congregation (consisting of 6 families, 31 members of whom 12 communicant members) under supervision of the consistory of the church at Orangeville. Advice is asked how to go about this: 1. is it possible to have a house-congregation only 1½ hours travelling from the church? 2. Must elders go there for the services, especially when there is Lord's Supper or Baptism. How about catechism instruction, home visits, and financial contributions?

Classis advises the church at

Orangeville to further investigate the grounds for starting such a house-congregation, and if these are deemed sufficient to encourage and promote this development.

b) The church at Ottawa reports that it is in the process of purchasing a piece of property for the purpose of building on it a parsonage and a church building. This implies that Ottawa would be requesting some increased financial aid for the year 1990. Classis received this for information.

c) The church at Fergus requests pulpit-supply as of October 22 and following for three months. Classis decides to grant pulpit-supply once a month, including the church at Elora, as follows: Fergus: October 22 — van Popta, November 26 — Aasman, January 17 — den Hollander; Elora: September 17 — Mulder, October 24 — Gleason, November 19 — Feenstra, December 3, Nederveen.

10. A letter was received from the church at Orangeville inviting the churches to attend the installation of the Rev. W. den Hollander on July 16, 1989. Classis appoints the Rev. J. Mulder to represent classis at this installation.

11. Appointments.

a) As convening church for next classis is appointed the church at Burlington-South. Date and place: Friday, September 15., 9:00 a.m., at the Rehoboth Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington-West.

Suggested officers for this classis are: Rev. P.G. Feenstra — chairman; Rev. J. De Jong — clerk; Rev. G.Ph. van Popta — vice-chairman.

12. During the personal question period pastor Gleason asks about the manner of electing examiners. Br. Wildeboer of Grand Valley asks for representation of classis at the installation of Rev. P. Aasman. Rev. Feenstra will represent classis.

Rev. D. De Jong speaks a few words of farewell and wishes the churches the Lord's blessing. The chairman responds by thanking the Rev. D. DeJong for the work he has done in the midst of the churches and expresses the wish that the Lord will still give him the strength to serve in His church.

13. Censure according to Church Order Article 44 appears not to be necessary.

14. The Acts and Press Release are read and adopted.

15. After the ladies (including sr. Douma of the Netherlands) are thanked for their good services to classis, Psalm 66:6 is sung, and Rev. J. De Jong leads in thanksgiving prayer. At 3:40 p.m. classis is closed.

On behalf of classis,
D. DeJong, vice-chairman, e.t.

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Raise your hand if you have counted the days before you go BACK TO SCHOOL.

I know some of you are glad. Some of you are sad. But after a good holiday, it's time to go back to work, right? Everyone goes back to work after a holiday. And your job is to learn things.

You have tools for your job of learning too. Glossy textbooks, blackboards, films, videos, calculators.

Maybe this year you'll even have a computer in your class. You know not all children learned that way.

Pioneer children sat on hard wooden benches, together reciting their lessons out loud.

Roman school boys had a slave with them to carry their books and spank them if necessary!

Chinese children learned math on the beads of their abacus.

Now I want to ask you the question: "What is YOUR favourite way of working at school?"

Do you like working alone, or with one friend, or in a group?

Do you like to read to find answers? Or would you prefer to watch a film?

Do you like to listen to oral reports from your classmates and discuss them?

Please write and tell us what you think is the most interesting way to learn.

Short note or long letter, send it to:

Aunt Betty
c/o Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2J 3X5



Time for birthday wishes!

We all join in wishing the following Busy Beavers a very happy and thankful birthday and many happy returns of the day! May the Lord guide and bless you in the year ahead. Here's hoping you have a great day celebrating with your family and your friends!

September

Jane Schulenberg	2	Mary Vandeburgt	11
Alisa Schouten	3	Cheryl Schouten	12
Chris Spoelstra	3	Teresa Oosterhoff	18
Jason Tenhage	4	Walter Bartels	19
Michael Hummel	6	Mary Jane Helder	24
Karrie Eelhart	8	Deanna VanderWoerd	25
Emily Barendregt	10	Geraldine Feenstra	30



FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Monica Dalhuisen*. We are happy to have you join us. Have you got used to your new home, *Monica*? Keep up the good work puzzling. Write again soon.

And a big welcome to you, too, *Carrie-Lynn Poort*. How was your holiday at Rock Point? How is your team doing in soccer? Bye for now, *Carrie-Lynn*. Thank you for the puzzle!

Do you practice on your violin during the summer, *Amy Hordyk*? How was your holiday? Thank you for your poem and picture, *Amy*. Keep up the good work.

Hello, *Janine Vanderhoeven*. How are you enjoying the summer? Did you join in our big summer Quiz Contest, *Janine*? Thank you for the puzzles. Bye for now.

I'm glad you're enjoying the summer, *Laura Aasman*. How are your new cousins doing? And how did you like being on the soccer team? I think I like your coach, too! We'll have to save your summer poem for next year, *Laura*. But it'll keep, right?

I hope you didn't burn your marshmallows, *Nicole Aasman*. And did you catch lots of fish? And how were those dune buggy rides? Bye for now, *Nicole*.

Thank you for a newsy letter, *Nellie Bosveld*. I think you must have looked VERY PRETTY for that special wedding. My, but you were spoiled on your birthday, weren't you? Write again soon, *Nellie*.

Sounds to me as if you had lots of fun with your friend this summer, *Evelynn Bos*. Won't it be nice to have your Grandma over for a visit! Hope you have a good birthday, too. Bye for now, *Evelynn*. Thank you for the puzzles.

Thanks for the picture, *Earl Van Assen*. Does it keep you busy, *Earl*, caring for all those pets and animals? Is that what you would like to do when you grow up? How do you feel about going back to school, *Earl*? I'm looking forward to YOUR answer to that big question!

Sounds to me as if you really enjoyed that trip to the *Henrietta Breukelman*. Imagine! The smallest monkey by the greediest! How did your camping go, *Henrietta*? I'm curious to hear! Thank you for ALL the pictures. And you may tell your sisters they may join the club just as soon as they can. Write the letter to tell me they want to become members. All right, *Henrietta*?

Quiz Time!

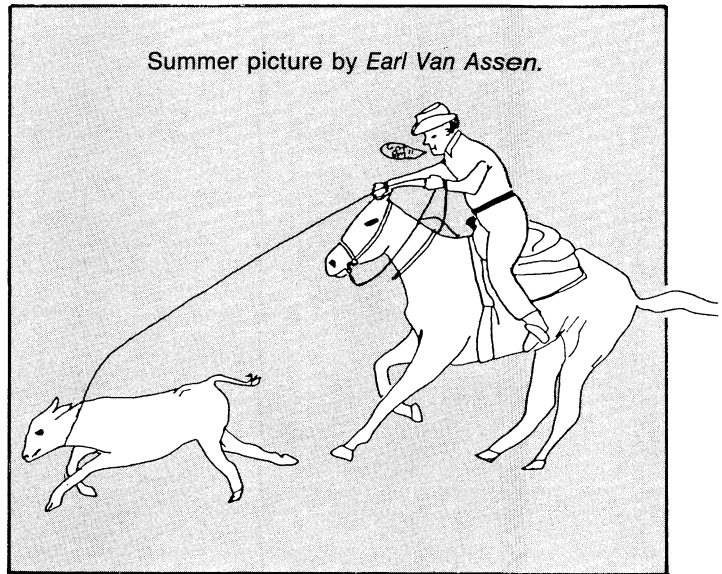
A Teaching Puzzle

Just before we go back to school it's good to remember what the Bible tells us in Proverbs 23:12 (Today's English Version)

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR TEACHER
AND LEARN ALL YOU CAN.

- Hear, my son, your father's _____, and reject not your _____ teaching. Prov. 1:8
- And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your _____; and you shall teach them diligently to your _____, and shall talk of them when you sit in your _____, and when you walk by the _____, and when you _____, and when you _____. Deut. 6:6, 7
- _____ me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God! Let Thy good Spirit lead me on a level _____. Psalm 143:10
- For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the _____, and to do it, and to _____ His statutes and ordinances in Israel. Ezra 7:10
- And on the Sabbath He began to teach in the _____; and many who heard Him were _____. . . . Mark 6:2
- . . . one of his disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to _____. . . . Luke 11:1
- . . . the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very _____ what you ought to _____. Luke 12:12
- And every day in the _____ and at _____ they did not cease _____ and _____ Jesus as the Christ. Acts 5:42
- Let the word of _____ dwell in you richly, _____ and admonish one another in all _____, and sing psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs with _____ in your hearts to God. Col. 3:16
- And no longer shall each man teach his _____ and each his brother, saying _____ the Lord, for they shall know Me, from the _____ of them to the _____, says the Lord. . . . Jer. 31:34

Want to earn a sticker reward? Send me your answers to this quiz, Busy Beavers.



Summer picture by Earl Van Assen.

WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver Carrie-Lynn Poort

W	B	G	O	L	D	F	I	N	C	H	E	BIRDS
O	D	U	S	P	A	R	R	O	W	I	A	Find:
R	E	L	K	C	A	R	G	A	Y	G	E	Eagle
C	L	L	E	C	N	L	W	Q	A	B	L	Gull
H	A	A	N	E	R	W	A	R	J	L	E	Chickadee
I	X	R	R	L	B	O	R	F	E	U	R	Blue Heron
C	P	W	D	K	U	V	B	P	U	E	E	Warbler
K	A	O	Y	I	M	T	L	C	L	H	K	Lark
E	R	G	J	Z	N	I	E	H	B	E	C	Parrot
D	R	O	B	I	N	A	R	A	S	R	I	Grackle
E	O	A	K	E	D	H	L	W	H	O	L	Wren
E	T	F	Z	C	A	D	O	K	B	N	F	Flicker
												Crow
												Cardinal
												Owl
												Blue Jay
												Hawk
												Robin
												Sparrow

I'm looking forward to your answers, Busy Beavers!
Bye for now. Hope to "see" you all next time!

Love,
Aunt Betty



Know that the LORD is God! It is He that made us and we are His.
Psalm 100:3a

We have received from the Lord another covenant child. With joy and gladness we announce the birth of our son and brother:

RYAN JAMES

Born July 25, 1989
Eric and Carolyn Vanderveen
(nee van Dijk)
Tyler John, Sean Riley
66 Bernard Bay
Winnipeg, MB R2C 3Y1

The Lord has enriched our family with the addition of another child, a son:

DEREK SEBASTIAN

on July 27, 1989
A brother for *Bart, Tessa, Bonny, Tim, Allard, Jeremy, Debby and Katy*
Harold and Tina Ludwig
(nee Jager)

Box 653
Aldergrove, BC V0X 1A0
Psalm 89:1
I will sing of Thy steadfast love, O LORD, for ever; with my mouth I will proclaim Thy faithfulness to all generations.

I praise Thee, for Thou art fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are Thy works.
Psalm 139:14

We thank God for another of His gifts, a son,

PAUL MICHAEL

Born July 13, 1989
A brother for *Brandon, Douglas, Nathan and Kristin*
Eric and Annette VanGrootheest
(nee Van Veen)

6680 Henry Street
Sardis, BC V2R 2B9